Belenois, a dozen *Colotis,* a bouquet of pansies (*Junonia*), *Byblia ilithyia,* as well as some lycaenids and skippers. Ideal for photography!

After having stalked a few butterflies with my camera I looked up to assess the situation. It turned out that I was being assessed myself, and that by a large bull elephant only ten metres away. Very gingerly I tiptoed back to the car. African elephants are much less vicious than their Indian cousins, but still . . . . ten metres is much too close for comfort, not least for someone who has had occasion to see how swiftly and decisively an elephant can move. Observations from the car revealed that I was at the edge of a herd of more than fifty peacefully grazing elephants, just the thing for which Tsavo is famous.

For the rest of the afternoon I must have made a weird sight trying to reconcile photography and elephants. I left the car with engine running, sank on my knees, took a photograph, retreated to the car, surveyed the scene for elephants, before starting the cycle again if no elephant was closer that 25 metres. They did not seem to mind much, and by the time when it became too dark for photography both elephants and car made their way towards their respective homes along the same trail.

Friends and relatives often assume that butterfly collecting in the tropics is a series of close calls with wild animals. That, of course, is very rarely so. Most wild animals avoid the butterfly collector, who usually makes a racket that can be heard well in advance. "But aren't you afraid of tigers?", is a common question. Would that I were lucky enough to see one while on foot, but that is hopelessly improbable. Lions you might meet, but except for one or two places where they are known to be dangerous (e.g. the Aberdares Plateau in Kenya), they are quite inoffensive. Only two animals present a real danger, attacking without warning, namely the African buffalo (climb a tree — if you have time) and the Indian elephant (run downhill — if you have the option). I very much hope that I shall never have the need to test either bit of advice in practice.

But when all is said and done by far the greatest danger in the tropics lies in the traffic. Getting to any bit of rainforest on any continent is many times more dangerous in real terms than wandering about in the wildest and most remote forest. — T.B. LARSEN, 358 Coldharbour Lane, London SW9 8PL.

1989 — A Year for the Holly Blue, *Celastrina argiolus* L.

This butterfly is well-known for having a year or two of comparative abundance followed by a period of scarcity — but 1989 has undoubtedly been a Holly Blue year.

My wife saw our first specimen of the year in the garden on 2nd May, followed by two on the next day and several on each of the following days until the 10th. After this time they were less frequent but I did not keep exact notes.

By 23rd July, when the summer brood was well out, a female was seen

egg-laying on our small ivy patch, an interesting garden feature upon which I have managed to place a domestic preservation order. Searching this patch on 29th July revealed larvae of varying sizes as well as many unhatched eggs. When breeding this butterfly from eggs collected on 7th August 1970, a third brood emerged between the 8th and 11th September and I therefore thought it worthwhile to see if another third brood would occur in 1989.

This butterfly is highly parasitised by the host specific *Listrodromus nycthemerus* (Gravenhorst) (ten parasites from fourteen larvae beaten from holly on 21st June, 1970) and in retrospect it would have been wiser to have collected eggs in 1989 rather than larvae. However, I had not anticipated that the rate of parasitisation would be as high as events proved. From ten larvae collected from the garden ivy on 14th August, ten parasites resulted between the 6th and 15th September. That put paid to seeing bred third brood butterflies, but compensation came on 19th September when three blues were seen flying in Lower Caversham, on the following day a female was flying in our own garden and the final specimen seen there on 29th September.

These may not be particularly late dates, for others have recorded Holly Blues in October, but the question does arise upon which foodplant would the late eggs be laid and would the larvae have time to complete development before the foodplant became unavailable?

In other years I have seen Holly Blues of the spring brood egg laying in the garden on a cultivated *Cornus* and on a species of *Cotoneaster,* but by late September the *Cornus* has only withered leaves available and the *Cotoneaster* is covered with rather tough berries. Ivy may be the answer, but this flowered very early in 1989 and by now the berries are well developed and fairly hard.

It will be interesting to see how the butterfly fares in 1990. — B.R. BAKER, Reading Museum and Art Gallery, Reading RG1 1QL.

Pyracantha as a possible foodplant of Holly Blue butterflies *Celastrina argiolus* (Linnaeus) (Lep.: Lycaenidae) in the London Area.

Lepidopterists resident in the south-east of England can not have failed to notice that 1989 was an exceptionally good year for Holly Blue butterflies *Celastrina argiolus* (Linnaeus) and I have heard that this situation was repeated elsewhere in the country. In the London area (defined by the London Natural History Society as being a circle of radius twenty miles based upon St Paul's Cathedral), butterflies were in great number, with several of this normally near-solitary species being seen flying together on many occasions. Adults, usually males, were seen in a great many areas from which they were apparently absent during the intensive searching from 1980 to 1986 which culminated in the publication of *The Butterflies of the London Area* (London Natural History Society, 1987).